WE CLAIM:

1. A method for activating at least one vascular endothelial growth factor selected from the group consisting of VEGF-C and VEGF-D, comprising treating said at least one vascular endothelial growth factor with a serine protease.

2. A method according to Claim 1, wherein the serine protease is plasmin.

3. A method according to Claim 1, wherein said at least one vascular endothelial growth factor is in an unprocessed form or a partially processed form.

4. A method according to Claim 1, wherein said vascular endothelial growth factor is VEGF-D.

5. A method according to Claim 1, wherein said vascular endothelial growth factor is VEGF-C.

6. A method for screening for a protease that activates at least one of VEGF-C or VEGF-D, wherein said VEGF-C or VEGF-D has at least one of a C-propeptide or an N-propeptide, the method comprising treating at least one of VEGF-C or VEGF-D with a candidate protease, and detecting VHD, wherein the detection of VHD indicates that the candidate protease is capable of activating VEGF-C or VEGF-D.

7. A method for screening for a protease that activates at least one of VEGF-C or VEGF-D, using a synthetic peptide derived from VEGF-C or VEGF-D, the method comprising treating said synthetic peptide with a candidate protease, and detecting cleavage of the VEGF-C or VEGF-D by said candidate protease using scintillation proximity assay.

8. A method for identifying inhibitors of activation of at least one VEGF-C or VEGF-D, the method comprising admixing at least one of VEGF-C or VEGF-D with a candidate substance and plasmin, and measuring inhibition of release of VHD from the at least one of VEGF-C or VEGF-D.

9. A method according to Claim 8, further comprising testing whether said candidate substance inhibits degradation of another substrate of plasmin other than VEGF-C or VEGF-D, whereby a substance that inhibits release of VHD by plasmin but not

degradation of the other substrate indicates that said substance is an inhibitor of activation of VEGF-C or VEGF-D.

10. A method for screening for an inhibitor of plasmin activation of VEGF-C or VEGF-D, using a synthetic peptide derived from said VEGF-C or VEGF-D, the method comprising treating said synthetic peptide with a candidate inhibitor and plasmin and detecting lack of cleavage of the peptide by plasmin in the presence of said candidate inhibitor using scintillation proximity assay.

11. A method of treatment comprising administering to a patient in need thereof an effective amount of at least one inhibitor of plasmin.

12. A method of treatment comprising administering to a patient in need thereof an effective amount of at least one inhibitor of VEGF-C or VEGF-D activation by plasmin.

13. A method according to claim 12, wherein said at least one inhibitor is an antibody, or an immunologically active fragment thereof, to VEGF-C or VEGF-D.

14. A pharmaceutical composition for activating VEGF-C or VEGF-D or both, comprising an effective amount of plasmin and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

15. A method of treatment comprising administering an effective amount of the pharmaceutical composition of Claim 14 to a patient in need threreof.

16. A pharmaceutical composition for inhibiting VEGF-C or VEGF-D, or both, comprising an inhibitor of VEGF-C or VEGF-D activation by plasmin, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

17. A method according to Claim 15, wherein the inhibitor is an antibody or fragment thereof, wherein said antibody or fragment thereof binds to at least one of VEGF-D or VEGF-C, and wherein said antibody or fragment thereof blocks plasmin from activating at least one of VEGF-D or VEGF-C.